

VZCZCXRO3656

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHAT RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK
RUEHKUK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHTRO
RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUCNDT #1024/01 3101416
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 051416Z NOV 08
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5294
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 001024

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#)

SUBJECT: UNRWA REPORT AND GENERAL DEBATE: SITUATION IN
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES REMAINS DIRE; NAHR EL-BARED REFUGEE
CAMP RECONSTRUCTION DEEMED A PRIORITY

[¶1](#). Summary: The UN General Assembly's Special Political and
Decolonization Committee (the Fourth Committee) held its
general debate on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency
for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on October
29-30. Two UNRWA officials opened the session with reports
detailing the Agency's 2007 operations and financing. The
former highlighted challenges resulting from the humanitarian
crises in the West Bank and Gaza and in Lebanon, remarked on
the Annapolis Conference, and called for more funding. The
latter noted an anticipated drop in donations in FY2008 due
to increases in food and energy costs, and staff salaries.
Twenty-three states spoke during the debate. Several states
called for more funding, in particular for reconstruction of
the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in Lebanon. Some states
(Norway, Switzerland) pledged to increase their overall
contributions. Many states (Syria, Cuba on behalf of the
NAM) and the Palestinian Observer Mission accused Israel of
violating international law. The Fourth Committee begins
voting on UNRWA draft resolutions on November 7. End Summary

UNRWA Report on 2007 Operations

[¶2](#). United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine
Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Karen
Koning-Abuzayd stated that despite the crises in the West
Bank and Gaza and northern Lebanon, the Agency continued
facilitating its services. She said that the ongoing,
two-year humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the West Bank had
dwarfed earlier calamities. Koning-Abuzayd lamented the
economic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian areas,
attributing it to Israel's closures and restrictions on
movement. Concerning the Annapolis Conference, she commented
that it was too early to assess its effectiveness and
reiterated the Palestinians' statement that there could be no
partial or interim agreements.

[¶3](#). On Lebanon, Koning-Abuzayd stated that the 30,000 refugees
from the destroyed Nahr al-Bared refugee camp would need
support during the three years of camp reconstruction. She
highlighted that the number of registered refugees rose to
4.6 million as of June 30 (a 30 per cent increase in 10
years). Regarding funding, she noted that the Agency no
longer faced a decline in real levels of contributions but
added that the funding deficit could reach \$78 million (\$7
million more than in 2007).

UNRWA Report on Financing

[¶4](#). Rapporteur of the Working Group of the Financing of UNRWA
Jonas Jolle (Norway) stated that states' pledges for UNRWA's
2008 budget were anticipated to fall short of the budgeted

expenditure due to increases in food and energy prices, as well as in staff salaries. Jolle noted the Agency's emergency appeal for \$262.4 million (covering 16 months from September 2008 to the end of 2009) and called on states to support it. He noted the June 23 Vienna Conference at which states launched an appeal for \$445 million over a three-year period to support Nahr el-Bared reconstruction and stated that as of August 31, donations totaled \$42.6 million. Jolle highlighted that 70 per cent of registered refugees rely on UNRWA for assistance, and that rebuilding the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp and providing assistance to the displaced refugees remain challenges.

General Debate Highlights

15. Palestinian Observer Mission: The Palestinian delegate stated that despite renewal of the peace process last year, it had not resulted in a just solution. The Palestinian delegate said that Israel had offered only "rhetoric and intransigence" while violating international law. In Gaza, he deemed the situation "severe," adding that 50 per cent of the refugees comprised children and that 80 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza lived in poverty. In the West Bank, the Palestinian delegate said that Israel's checkpoints, settlements, and road network obstructed refugee access to UNRWA. Concerning Lebanon, he lamented the under-funding of Nahr el-Bared reconstruction.

16. Lebanon on behalf of the Arab Group: The Group argued that Israel imposed indirect taxes on UNRWA and that Israel's restrictions on movement prevented UNRWA staff from entering East Jerusalem. It called on the international community to address those issues and for Israel to end restrictions on

USUN NEW Y 00001024 002 OF 002

UNRWA staff. On funding, the Group appealed to states to provide sufficient donations. Regarding the West Bank, the Group stated that Israel had confiscated 40 per cent of the land (destroying 847 houses in the process) and established 608 roadblocks.

17. Israel: Israel noted that in contrast to Western states having pledged over 90 per cent to rebuild the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, Arab states had pledged only a fraction. Israel reaffirmed its cooperation with UNRWA and added that the Palestinians needed to make changes, such as supporting a viable Palestinian state. Regarding the UNRWA Report on its 2007 operations, Israel criticized it for its biased tone and use of selective facts, arguing that it had identified Israel as the sole cause of the Palestinian situation. Israel noted that it had recently removed 111 roadblocks and four central checkpoints in the West Bank.

18. Syria and Iran: Syria stated that the "settlement campaign" had grown under Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and that it had established 847 settlements since the December 2007 Annapolis Conference. It called on the UN Security Council to have Israel account for its alleged murders of UNRWA staff, stating that they had been fully documented. Syria welcomed UNRWA's emergency appeal for funding Nahr el-Bared reconstruction. Iran spoke in a right of reply in response to Israel's "unsubstantiated allegations against it," arguing that it was part of Israel's campaign to distract the international community from the "atrocities" it has committed.

19. Cuba on behalf of the Nonaligned Movement (NAM): The NAM stated that it condemned Israel for conducting extra-judicial killings, targeted assassinations, and a psychological terror campaign. It also criticized Israel for turning Palestinians in Gaza into prisoners. The NAM reiterated its support for the proposal calling on Israel to reimburse the charges it levies on UNRWA. India called on the international community, particularly the Quartet (U.S., EU, Russia, and the UN), to redouble its efforts to bring peace to the Middle

East.

¶10. France on behalf of the European Union (EU): The EU urged states, particularly those in the Middle East to honor the commitments they made during the June 23 Vienna Conference. The EU welcomed the Annapolis Conference and said that it carried the hope of a sustainable solution. Switzerland stated that it intended to make specific contributions on top of its general contribution, explicitly mentioning additional support for Nahr el-Bared reconstruction. It highlighted the Vienna Conference as proof of international solidarity with the refugees and states affected by the conflict.

UNRWA Draft Resolutions

¶11. The Fourth Committee will vote on four UNRWA-related draft resolutions on November 7, under Agenda item 29. The resolutions are as follows: Assistance to Palestine Refugees; Persons Displaced as a Result of the June 1967 and Subsequent Hostilities; Operations of UNRWA for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; and Palestine Refugees' Properties and Their Revenues.
Khalilzad